

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 STATE 155131
ORIGIN SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 R

DRAFTED BY NEA/ARN:MDRAPER:PDW

APPROVED BY P:PCHABIB

H:RFLATEN

PM:DKEENE (INFORMED)

NEA:ALATHETON, JR

T MR NYE (INFO)

S/S/STEINER

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O P 021626Z JUL 77

FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY BEIRUT IMMEDIATE

INFO AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY AMMAN PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY CAIRO PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY JIDDA PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 155131

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MASS, MILI, LE, US, IS, SY, SA

SUBJECT: REBUILDING THE LEBANESE ARMY: U.S. ASSISTANCE

1. THIS CABLE IS DESIGNED IN PART TO BRIEF INFO ADDRESSEES
ON STATUS OF OUR THINKING RE POSSIBLE U.S. COOPERATION AND
ASSISTANCE IN REBUILDING A NATIONAL LEBANESE ARMY, AND
THEREFORE CONTAINS INFORMATION ALREADY KNOWN TO AMB. PARKER.

2. LEBANESE REQUEST: LEBANESE AUTHORITIES HAVE BEGUN
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PISTOLS, RIFLES, MACHINE GUNS, APC'S, MORTARS, UNARMORED

TRANSPORT, COMMUNICATIONS GEAR, ENGINEERING EQUIPMENT) WHICH WE IN THE DEPARTMENT HAD BEEN THINKING WOULD BE FEASIBLE AND PRUDENT FOR THE U.S. TO PROVIDE. LIST DOES NOT INCLUDE TANKS OR OTHER HEAVY OR HIGHLY SOPHISTICATED WEAPONRY.

3. LEBANESE HAD HOPED FOR AT LEAST SOME GRANT ASSISTANCE, BUT THIS IS NOT FEASIBLE. BASICALLY, HOWEVER, THEY WANT AN

ARMY LOOKING TO THE WEST FOR EQUIPMENT, TRAINING AND MILITARY PHILOSOPHY. FOR PRACTICAL AS WELL AS POLITICAL REASONS THEY WANT OFFICIAL ASSOCIATION WITH THE U.S., AND THEREFORE HOPE THAT ALL EQUIPMENT TRANSACTIONS WILL BE ON A GOVT-TO-GOVT BASIS RATHER THAN IN ORDINARY COMMERCIAL CHANNELS.

4. TENTATIVE U.S. THINKING: FOR MANY REASONS, THE U.S. BELIEVES THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A CREDIBLE, EFFICIENT, LEBANESE FORCE IS IMPORTANT FOR LEBANON'S STABILITY. IT COULD BE A KEY INSTRUMENT IN SUPPORT OF THE UNIFYING POLICIES OF SARKIS AND EVENTUALLY ALLOW HIM TO ASSERT CENTRAL GOVERNMENTAL AUTHORITY THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY. IT COULD STRENGTHEN THE CENTRAL GOVT VIS-A-VIS PRIVATE MILITIAS AND PALESTINIANS AND PROVIDE A FULCRUM FOR NEGOTIATING PARTIAL DISARMAMENT ARRANGEMENTS WITH THEM. WHILE WE DO NOT EXPECT IT TO OCCUR QUICKLY, ESTABLISHMENT
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OF A CREDIBLE FORCE WOULD HASTEN THE DAY WHEN THE SYRIANS COULD BEGIN STAGED WITHDRAWALS OF THEIR FORCES AND THEREBY EASE ISRAELI APPREHENSIONS ABOUT THE CONTINUED SYRIAN INVOLVEMENT IN LEBANON. FINALLY, SUCH AN ARMY WOULD ALSO ASSIST THE PROCESS OF DEVELOPING AND STRENGTHENING OTHER MULTI-CONFESSIONAL INSTITUTIONS NEEDED TO ASSURE THE UNITY AND INTEGRATION OF THE COUNTRY.

5. THERE IS ADMITTEDLY NO ASSURANCE THAT CONDITIONS IN LEBANON HAVE EVOLVED TO THE POINT THAT GOL EFFORTS WILL SUCCEED IN CREATING AN EFFECTIVE ARMY OF THE KIND SARKIS HAS IN MIND WHICH WOULD AVOID THE CONFESSIONAL FLAWS OF THE OLD LEBANESE ARMY. AMB. PARKER BELIEVES GOL IS GOING ABOUT THE JOB IN A WAY THAT MAKES SUCCESS AT LEAST POSSIBLE, HOWEVER; OUR ASSOCIATION WITH THIS EFFORT COULD BE A FACTOR IN WHETHER OR NOT IT SUCCEEDS, AND OUR PRELIMINARY JUDGMENT IS THAT ALTERNATIVES TO SUCCESS ARE SUFFICIENTLY GRIM FOR FUTURE OF LEBANON AND OUR INTERESTS IN AREA TO JUSTIFY OUR TAKING THE CHANCE.

6. THEREFORE, CONSISTENT WITH OUR GENERAL POLICIES IN SUPPORT OF SARKIS, WE HAVE BEEN CONSIDERING PROVIDING

TO LEBANON DOLS 25 MILLION IN FMS CREDITS IN THE CURRENT FISCAL YEAR (1977), COMPOSED OF DOLS 5 MILLION ALREADY AVAILABLE FOR LEBANON PLUS DOLS 20 MILLION REPROGRAMMED FROM UNUSED FUNDS FROM OTHER-COUNTRY PROGRAMS. FOR FISCAL 1978 WE HAVE BEEN THINKING OF REQUESTING FROM THE CONGRESS A SUPPLEMENTAL OF DOLS 50 MILLION IN FMS CREDIT. FOR FY 1979 WE HAVE BEEN THINKING OF RETURNING TO MORE MODEST LEVELS OF, SAY, DOLS 25 MILLION IN CREDIT. WE DO NOT RPT NOT WANT TO GET INTO A LONG-TERM MILITARY SUPPLY ARRANGEMENT BEYOND THE THREE-YEAR PERIOD. SIMULTANEOUSLY, WE

WOULD LIKE TO SET ASIDE SIGNIFICANT FUNDS (I.E. DOLS 500,000 IN FY 1978) FOR TRAINING.

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7. CONSULTATIONS WITH CONGRESS: AS PART OF THE ADMINISTRATION'S DESIRE TO EFFECT GREATER COORDINATION WITH CONGRESS WHILE PROGRAMS ARE STILL IN THE PLANNING STAGE, WE DECIDED TO SOUND OUT CONGRESSIONAL ATTITUDES THROUGH INFORMAL CONSULTATIONS. MAKING CLEAR THAT WE HAD REACHED NO RPT NO DECISIONS YET, WE OUTLINED OUR THINKING ALONG THE LINES DESCRIBED ABOVE TO SENATE AND HOUSE STAFFERS.

8. ATHERTON ON JUNE 30 APPEARED IN CLOSED SESSION WITH THE MIDDLE EAST AND FOREIGN ASSISTANCE SUBCOMMITTEES OF THE SENATE FOREIGN RELATIONS COMMITTEE. THE REACTIONS OF THE SENATORS TO OUR THINKING RANGED ROUGHLY FROM UNEASY, TO SKEPTICAL, TO OPPOSED. THEIR CONCERNS WERE FOCUSSED MAINLY ON THE FOLLOWING:

(A) FEAR THAT THIS WOULD BE AN OPEN-ENDED POLITICAL COMMITMENT, DRAWING US DOWN A SLIPPERY PATH INTO A VIETNAMESE-LIKE SITUATION.

(B) THE HIGH U.S. VISIBILITY IN SUCH A PROGRAM. SOME BELIEVED THAT ANOTHER GOVERNMENT SUCH AS SAUDI ARABIA SHOULD BE OUT IN FRONT IN ASSISTING THE LEBANESE; THERE WAS ALSO CONCERN THAT ISRAEL, AS WELL AS SYRIA AND EGYPT, MIGHT NOT LIKE OUR ROLE.

(C) CONCERN THAT THE FORCE WOULD BE TOO SMALL AND WEAK TO DO AN EFFECTIVE JOB, THAT IT WOULD FALL APART AT THE FIRST CHALLENGE, OR THAT IT WOULD BE SUBVERTED BY THE SYRIANS, OR THAT THE LEBANESE FACTIONS WOULD NOT SUPPORT EITHER THE ARMY OR THE U.S. ROLE IN ASSISTING IT.

(D) THE VIEW THAT LEBANON HAD RESOURCES OF ITS OWN TO PURCHASE COMMERCIALLY WHAT IT NEEDED AND THAT THE U.S. CONFIDENTIAL

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SHOULD NOT BE DRAWN PREMATURELY INTO A PROGRAM DEFINED AS "ASSISTANCE."

9. SOME SENATORS, WHILE SKEPTICAL, WERE READY TO REVIEW THEIR POSITIONS IF WE COULD AUTHORITATIVELY AND MORE GRAPHICALLY ANSWER SOME OF THEIR CONCERNS. THEY GENERALLY ENDORSED U.S. TRAINING. THE COMMITTEE GENERALLY DID NOT ADDRESS ITSELF--BECAUSE OF THE LACK OF TIME--TO THE STARK ALTERNATIVES OF A FAILURE TO ESTABLISH A CREDIBLE ARMY.

10. NEXT STEPS: FOR AMBASSADOR PARKER: WITHOUT YOUR AT THIS STAGE DISCUSSING OUR THINKING WITH THEM, WE WILL REQUIRE UPDATED REPORTS ON THE ATTITUDES OR PROBABLE

ATTITUDES OF THE MAJOR FACTIONS IN LEBANON TO, FIRST, THE FORMATION BY SARKIS OF A UNIFIED NATIONAL ARMY, AND SECOND, FORMAL U.S. ASSISTANCE TO THAT ARMY. GIVE US YOUR BEST PRESENT JUDGMENT OF INDIVIDUAL POSITIONS OF PIVOTAL LEADERS IN CHRISTIAN, SUNNI AND SHI'A MUSLIM QUARTERS, CITING PUBLIC STATEMENTS WHENEVER POSSIBLE. ANALYZE THE PROBABLE ATTITUDES OF (A) PLO/FATAH AND (B) THE IRAQI AND LIBYAN-SUPPORTED REJECTIONISTS.

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ORIGIN SS-15

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /016 R

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DRAFTED BY:NEA/ARN:WNHOWELL:PDW

APPROVED BY:NEA/ARN:MDRAPER

S/S-O:TGMARTIN

NEA:EABINGTON

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O 052334Z JUL 77

FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY KUWAIT IMMEDIATE

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 155131

EXDIS

FOLLOWING REPEAT STATE 155131 ACTION BEIRUT INFO DAMASCUS
TEL AVIV AMMAN CAIRO JIDDA DATED JUL 02:

QTE: C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 155131

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Message Attributes

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Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
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Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
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TAGS: MASS, MILI, LE, US, IS, SY, SA
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